

I. Introduction

In September and October 2000, Southern Research, Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc. conducted an archaeological test investigation of Site 1Ja643, a large multicomponent prehistoric site in Jackson County, Alabama (Figure 1). This project was required by the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP), Jackson County EWP Project 39-00-01. Accelerated erosion of this archaeological site presents a danger to County Road 91 (CR91) and stabilization efforts are planned for eight work zones. The purpose of the investigation was to identify all cultural resources within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) and to evaluate the eligibility of the identified resources for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The EWP program, which is federally funded, is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that NRCS, as the responsible federal agency, must consider the effects of a project's undertakings to historic properties. The Jackson County Commission, who serves as the sponsor of the EWP project, is responsible for completion of compliance with Section 106 and other pertinent legal authorities.

This report is organized into five chapters, followed by a list of references cited, and five appendices. The remainder of this chapter presents a brief description of the project environment, a brief overview of archaeological research in the Tennessee River valley, and a discussion of previous archaeological research conducted at 1Ja643 and surrounding areas. Chapter II presents the research methods that were used in this project, including archival and historical research, field work, and laboratory analysis. Chapter III presents the project results beginning with the preliminary study of the proposed work areas, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings in Excavation Blocks A and B. This is followed by a description of the material culture represented in these excavations. Chapter IV includes an interpretation of the archaeological findings. Recommendations for future management of this important archaeological site follow in Chapter V.

Appendix I contains the vita of the project's Principal Investigator and primary report author. Appendix II is a copy of the revised Alabama Archaeological Site Form for 1Ja643. A copy of a draft nomination form for listing 1Ja643 in the National Register

of Historic Places is included in Appendix IV. Last but certainly not least, Appendix V is Susan L. Scott's zooarchaeological report on the faunal material recovered from 1Ja643.

Project Environment

The project area is located on a levee of the Tennessee River in Jackson County, Alabama (Sapp and Emplainscourt 1975; U.S. Geological Survey 1983; Lineback 1973). The site is on Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) property between the Tennessee River and CR 91, east of Bridgeport, Alabama. The site is located at an elevation of 600 feet above mean sea level on the shoreline of Guntersville Reservoir on the east bank of the Tennessee River, north of Long Island Creek within Township 1 South, Range 9 East, Section 32. Site 1Ja643 is a large site whose size was originally estimated to be 1190 m x 50 m, based on reconnaissance examination (Solis and Futato 1987). The revised site dimensions from the present study are: 2000 m NE-SW x 50 m NW-SE. The minor site dimension, however, consists largely of eroded and displaced surface artifacts on the shoreline and beneath Guntersville Lake and most of the intact portions of the site are less than 7 m wide. Soils on the site consist of Bruno fine sandy loam, which have been culturally modified by the addition of organic deposits and freshwater shellfish remains (Swenson 1954). Vegetation on the site consists of weeds, grasses, bushes, and small trees, which are growing on top of the older asphalt road surface and on the exposed river bank (Figures 2 through 7). The site lies within the Ridge and Valley physiographic province, which is underlain by a variety of sedimentary rocks.

Archaeological Overview

The Tennessee River valley conceals a long record of human history, which has fascinated archaeologists and other interested scholars since the early nineteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, this research was the realm of the antiquarian and was not scientific archaeology as such. Many of the early excavations explored the mounds and other earthworks along the river. President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal ushered in a new era of archaeological research, which accompanied the many hydroelectric construction projects of the TVA. The earliest of these was Norris Reservoir, on the upper stretches of the Tennessee River. Guntersville Lake, located in the middle of a series of impoundments, was the scene of numerous archaeological excavations. World War II interrupted the analysis and reporting of many TVA projects, but by the 1950s a rudimentary record of TVA's Guntersville archaeological work was completed. The first TVA archaeology was by no means the



Figure 2. West View from Block A, 1Ja643



Figure 3. North View from Block B, 1Ja643



Figure 4. Northeast View from Block B, 1Ja643



Figure 5. Southeast View from Block A, 1Ja643



Figure 6. East View of Eroding Bank, 1Ja643



Figure 7. Northwest View of Shoreline, 1Ja643

last. Cultural resource management projects, including work done in advance of power plant construction as well as general resource inventory work, kept archaeologists busy throughout the rest of the twentieth century. The advent of the “New Archaeology” in the 1960s and federally mandated archaeological studies in the middle 1970s brought a new perspective to our knowledge of human settlement and land use in the Southeastern United States. It is within this scientific framework that the present study was conducted.

The earliest date of human’s arrival in the Tennessee River Valley is not known, although man was certainly present in the region by 12,000 years ago. Recent data from Monteverde, Chile, Cactus Hill, Virginia, and the Topper site, South Carolina, have rattled archaeologists’ perceptions of “Early Man in the New World”. While this debate is fresh and exciting, solid evidence for Pre-Clovis in the Tennessee River valley has not been demonstrated. Consequently, we begin the story with the arrival of the Paleoindians, who were a highly mobile group. In most of North America, Paleoindian sites are recognized by the presence of Clovis type (and other fluted and unfluted lanceolate) projectile points. The Quad site and the Flint Creek rockshelter, both located many kilometers downstream from 1Ja643 on the Tennessee River, have yielded Paleoindian tools, but no open-air buried Paleoindian sites have been reported in northern Alabama (Walthall 1982:31-34)

From his deep test excavations in the Tellico Reservoir, many kilometers upstream from 1Ja643, Jefferson Chapman demonstrated the long, stratigraphic record of soil deposition in the river valley extending back to the Early Archaic period. From Chapman’s and other excavations, archaeologists have reconstructed the cultural sequence for the Archaic period in the region.

Walthall divides the Archaic period of the middle Tennessee River valley into Early, Middle, and Late Archaic subperiods. He places the Early Archaic from 8000 to 6000 B.C.; the Middle Archaic from 6000-4000 B.C.; and the Late Archaic from 4000 to 1000 B.C. Although archaeologists in Alabama often discuss the final centuries of the Archaic period as the Gulf Formational period, this appellation is not usually extended to extreme northeast Alabama where 1Ja643 is located. Other archaeologists, including this author, place the dividing lines of the Archaic subperiods at different points, particularly in regards to the Late Archaic.

Traditionally, archaeologists have divided the Woodland period into three subperiods, early, middle and late with the Early Woodland beginning at 1000 B.C. and continuing to A.D. 1, Middle Woodland spanning A.D. 1 to 500, and Late Woodland

extending to A.D. 1000. Walthall, however, divides the Woodland period of the Tennessee River valley in Alabama into three subperiods, early-middle, late-middle, and late. The Early Middle Woodland is evidenced by the Colbert phase, which lasts from 300 B.C. to A.D. 100. This is followed by the Late-Middle Woodland Copena phase, from A.D. 100 to A.D. 500. The Late Woodland in northeast Alabama is known by the Flint River and McKelvey phases, which span the period from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1000 (Walthall 1982:111, Table 3).

Walthall places the Mississippian Period in the project vicinity from A.D. 900 to A.D. 1700 and he identifies three subperiods, Early, Mature, and Protohistoric. In the Tennessee River valley, he identifies the Langston phase for the Early Mississippian period from A.D. 900 to A.D. 1200; the Henry Island, Hobbs Island, and Kogers Island phases for the Mature Mississippian period from A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1500; and the Crow Creek phase for the Protohistoric from A.D. 1500 to A.D. 1700 (Walthall 1982:193, Table 4). All of these phases are defined from excavations located well south of the study area. Mississippian people in the Jackson County, Alabama vicinity may have been more strongly influenced during the Mississippian period by cultures located upstream (Sullivan 1995).

A wide variety of Historic Period research has been undertaken in the Tennessee River Valley, although this work has only minimal bearing on the prehistoric remains at 1Ja643. During the historic period, Site 1Ja643 was used as a transportation route, a function that it continues to serve today. Only a few scattered historic artifacts were recovered from the site and no evidence of historic occupation was observed.

Previous Archaeological Investigations Near 1Ja643

As previously mentioned, the archaeological resources of the Tennessee River attracted the attention of nineteenth century scholars, including Clarence B. Moore, whose exploits are relatively well documented (Moore 1915). Archaeological survey was conducted in conjunction with the construction of TVA's Guntersville Reservoir in the 1930s, which was reported decades later by Webb and Wilder (1951). Site 1Ja643 was not identified, however, in that study, although many sites with similar characteristics were reported in the surrounding areas.

Sites in Jackson County that were excavated by Webb and his colleagues included the: Langston Mound, Hardin, Guffey, Sauty, Benson, Snodgrass, Sublet Ferry, Crow Creek Island, Stearns, Cox, Cox Village, and Rudder sites. With the exception of the Benson site, all of these excavations yielded human burials. The

nearest of these to the project area was the Rudder site, approximately 4 miles downstream and on the opposite bank of the river, and the next nearest were the Cox and Cox Village sites, which were approximately 5 miles downstream and on the same side as 1Ja643. No sites upstream from 1Ja643 were examined by William Webb's archaeological survey (Webb and Wilder 1951: Figure 1, Inset).

From this work, Webb developed a chronology for the Guntersville basin, which included Gunterlands I through V periods. Gunterlands I encompassed the preceramic (Archaic) period. Webb noted that this period was less well represented in the Guntersville basin than in the Pickwick and Wheeler reservoirs located downstream. Gunterlands II was marked by the introduction of fiber-tempered pottery (similar to the Wheeler series), which was probably trade ware. Few sites from this period were present in the Guntersville basin. Gunterlands III began with the introduction of limestone-tempered pottery. Sites from this period contained large villages with extensive middens. Traits associated with the period included chipped limestone celts, slate and shale gorgets, and dog burials. Human burials, associated with the Gunterlands III, period were not observed by Webb. Sites from the Guntersville III period exhibit ceremonial traits of the Copena Focus. Among their many traits, Copena sites often contain copper and galena artifacts, hence the derived name, Copena. The mound at the Roden Mounds site, located downstream in the Guntersville Lake, contained limestone tempered pottery sherds and may be an example of a conical Copena mound. Other Copena phase sites in the region included the: Rose, Samuels, Columbus City, and Hampton Cave sites. Gunterlands IV was marked by the introduction of shell tempered pottery. Webb noted that people from this period often used Gunterlands III middens to bury their dead. Gunterlands V began with the introduction of European artifacts and continued to the Cherokee Removal period. Only three sites from this period were identified by Webb in the Guntersville basin (Webb and Wilder 1951:269-274).

Subsequent excavations at the stratified deposits in Russell Cave, which was discovered in 1953 in northern Jackson County, Alabama, provided important information on prehistoric settlement in the vicinity (Miller 1956; Griffin 1974; Broyles 1958). Ceramic assemblages from the Gunterlands III strata at Russell Cave yielded 97 percent limestone-tempered sherds, including Mulberry Creek Plain, brushed, Long Branch Fabric Marked, cord marked, incised, Bluff Creek Simple Stamped, Wright Check Stamped, and Pickwick Complicated Stamped decorations (Broyles 1958). Broyles noted that the pottery assemblage at Russell Cave, with its high incidence of complicated stamped wares, was atypical of open air sites in the vicinity, such as the Cox Site in Guntersville Lake.

Important Cultural Resource Management-era excavations in Jackson County were conducted at the Bellefonte, Comer's Bridge sites, and Long Island Mounds sites (Futato 1977; Futato and Solis 1983; Ball et al. 1976). A Master's of Arts thesis was compiled on Snodgrass Small Mound (1JA99), which is located in Jackson County (Callaghan 1987). These studies help to provide a research context for modern archaeological investigations in the study area.

Excavations at the Bellefonte Site, which is located less than 10 miles downstream from 1Ja643, revealed a small shallow shell midden containing Early and Middle Woodland components (Futato 1977). The site contained nine burials from the Woodland and Mississippian period, including flexed and semi-flexed forms. Pottery was predominately Mulberry Creek Plain and Wright Cord Marked. One Middle Woodland pit from Bellefonte was radiocarbon dated to about A.D. 420 (+/-60) (DIC-536).

Previous Research at 1Ja643

Site 1Ja643 was first recorded during a shoreline reconnaissance survey by the Office of Archaeological Research (OAR) (since renamed the Office of Archaeological Services (OAS)) for TVA in 1986. Their study attempted to maximize the identification of cultural resources on TVA-owned lands with a minimum of excavation. The NRHP status of Site 1Ja643 was undetermined by OAR's reconnaissance survey. Archaeologists Carlos Solis and Eugene Futato (1987) described it as:

"The site consists of continuous scatter of fire cracked rock and debitage as seen in the eroded bank. Scattered shell lenses were also noted, as much as 3 m below ground surface. This site is severely eroded and an abandoned road is situated atop the site. A newer road is also situated atop the eastern portion of the site" (Solis 1996).

Recent erosion has exposed: "Archaic, Woodland (Colbert phase) and unidentified Mississippian components: a steatite sherd; Long Branch Fabric Marked, Mulberry Creek Plain, Wright Check Stamped, and unidentified shell tempered plain as well as sand and grit tempered plain pottery. Faunal material is well preserved due to the presence of large amounts of mussel shell" (Buttram 2000:1-2). The site may contain a Terminal Archaic (Gulf Formational) component on the basis of the recovery of the steatite (soapstone) sherd. A Middle Woodland (Colbert phase) component tentatively was identified at the site by Solis and Futato (1987; Solis 1986).

Site 1Ja643 also has been examined by NRCS archaeologist, Teresa Paglione, who cleaned a series of bank profiles, which were included with the *Request for Proposals* for this project. Her work also include photo-documentation of bank exposures, as well as looting and other natural site disturbances. Ms. Paglione's brief examination demonstrated that mussel shell was deposited at numerous stages in the site's development (and at several locations) and the shells have likely enhanced the bone preservation in the adjacent soils. A tentative Mississippian component also was reported on the basis of plain pottery (Buttram 2000).

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Southern Research archaeologists Scot Keith, John Doolin, and John Kannady also reconnoitered Site 1Ja643 in mid-July 2000 in order to obtain a better understanding of the project environment and project's circumstances. This examination was useful in developing a feasible excavation plan for the site.